DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 205 033 FL 012 436

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TITLE The Acquisition of Verb Tenses and Temporal Expressions in Spanish: Age 2.0-4.6. Bilingual Education Paper Series, Vol. 4, No. 2, September 1980.
INSTITUTION California State Univ., Los Angeles. National Dissemination and Assessment Center.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (ED), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Sep 80
NOTE 41p.
AVAILABLE FROM National Dissemination and Assessment Center, 5151 State University Drive, King Hall C2094A, Los Angeles, CA 90032 ($2.00).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Language Acquisition; Language Research; Longitudinal Studies; Morphology (Languages); *Spanish; Spanish Speaking; *Verbs; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS *Tense (Verbs)

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes and compares the Spanish utterances of children between 2.0 and 4.6 years of age. The focus is on two aspects of children's speech: the production of verb tenses and the use of temporal expressions, such as adverbs of time. Four Spanish-speaking children, two male and two female, were interviewed for a total of two hours apiece. Analysis of the data shows the following results: (1) irregular verb forms appear from the earliest levels in the present and preterite indicative; (2) the largest simultaneous occurrence of new tenses is found at age 2.6; (3) third person singular is the most popular form across tenses and age levels; (4) an early tendency to provide "-ar" morphology for all verbs decreased in frequency across time; (5) all forms had the proper stress; (6) "ya" and "horita" were the most common temporal adverbs; (7) imperfect tense begins to solidify at 3.0; (8) conditional, inflected future, and the perfect tenses appear rarely; (9) in general, frequency of occurrence of the different tenses increased across time; and (10) the "cuando" clause first emerged at 3.3 and continued to increase in number thereafter, making more complexity possible. The information gathered in this study can provide a basis for determining expected verb usage among Hispanic children. (Author/AMH)

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ISSN 0161-3707

Vol. 4 No. 2
September 1980

ED205033

Bilingual Education PAPER SERIES

National Dissemination and Assessment Center
California State University, Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA. 90032

THE ACQUISITION OF VERB TENSES AND TEMPORAL EXPRESSIONS IN SPANISH: AGE 2.0 - 4.6

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This publication was printed with funds provided by the Bilingual Education Act, Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by Public Law 93.380.

THE ACQUISITION OF VERB TENSES AND TEMPORAL EXPRESSIONS IN SPANISH: AGE 2.0 - 4.6

Gustavo González

The purpose of this study is to analyze the Spanish utterances of children at different age levels between 2.0 and 4.6 years of age. The focus is on two aspects of children's speech: the production of verb tenses and the use of temporal expressions (such as adverbs of time). By comparing tenses and temporal adverb production at one age level with those at succeeding age levels, we can derive a fairly good picture of the development of these aspects across time.

The results presented here are based on recorded interviews with Mexican-American children in Texas. Four children (two male, two female) were interviewed* for a total of two hours apiece. The children came from the following age levels (given in years and months): 2.0, 2.6, 2.9, 3.0, 3.3, 3.6, 4.0, and 4.6. Children were permitted to take part in the study only if they could respond in Spanish to the interviewer's questions; those unable to do so were dismissed, since the objective of the study was to chronicle the acquisition of Spanish through analysis of language production. (As may be expected, the determination of who

*A total of 32 children were interviewed, four from each of eight age groups.

should participate at age 2.0 was rather difficult, since little of what can be termed "conversation" occurs at that age). The interviews had no formal structure. An attempt was made to elicit from the children the type of language they ordinarily used by introducing topics of interest to them; coloring books and story books were used at times when they appeared to lose interest or ran out of things to say.

The findings are presented by age level. Major changes noted since the previous age level are discussed. Examples from the corpus are identified by the child's initials, tape track (I or II), and transcript page number. An English translation of Spanish utterances used as examples is provided. The utterances (or portions thereof) are presented as the children produced them, including dialectal forms and forms in which the phonology has been simplified. Where necessary for clarity, the equivalent adult "standard" form is provided. Although one of the foci of the paper is the analysis of verb forms, the verbs were not (with rare exception) produced in isolation but in complete-sentence utterances.

AGE 2.0

Verb tense production at two years of age consisted of the present indicative and the preterit tenses. Of the 45 present indicative forms, 16 were the third person singular form *es* ("is"), from Spanish *ser* ("to be"). Nine of the 16 were found in questions:

¿Qué es éta (ésta)? "What's this (one)?" (LAL, II:65)

¿Qué es esto? "What's this (one)?" (LV I:6)

The second most common form was the third person singular form of *estar* ("to be"), *está* ("he/she/it is"). Twelve instances were encountered, including two in questions. Examples include:

¿One (=dónde) está mama? "Where's momma?" (TT, II:65)

Ta (=está) en el agua. "It's in the water." (LAL, I:41)

Verbs that are the equivalent of English "to be" thus accounted for more than 62 percent of the total for the present indicative tense. Labeling objects (or asking their name) and stating or asking about the location of a person or object were the major uses of *ser* and *estar*.

Other verbs occurred with less frequency. Appearing once apiece were *tengo* "I have," *va* "he/she goes," *van* "they go," *tiende* "he/she spreads," *sé* "I know," *quebra (quiebra)* "he/she breaks," *peya (=pega)* "he/she hits," and *jwewo (=juego)* "I play." *Tiene* "he/she has" and *pica* "he/she stings" were noted twice each, while *quero (=quiero)* "I want" and *viene* "he/she comes" were produced three times each. Of the forms in the present indicative verb paradigm, the most frequent was third person singular with 39 of 45 forms, or 87 percent. First person singular forms numbered five, and the third person plural form accounted for one form. It is worth noting that included in the first person singular forms are irregular forms *sé* and *tengo*. Their early appearance is probably due to their frequency of occurrence in the language in general. Required diphthongization in some verb stems were not always present. *Quiero* was sometimes produced as *quero*, *tiende* as *tende*, and *quiebra* as *quebra*.

Forms in the preterit tense for this age level were far fewer, totaling 23. The most popular form was *cayó* "he/she/it fell," with 14 occurrences. *Quebó (=quebró)* "it broke" occurred twice, once as a "yes/no" question, and seven forms were produced once apiece: *jue (=fue)* "he/she/it went," *juite (=fuiste)* "you (familiar) went," *oló (=lloró)* "he/she/it cried," *cabó (=acabó)* "he/she/it finished," *metó (=metió)* "he/she put in," *cotó (=cortó)* "he/she/it cut," and *quemé* "I burned." As with the present indicative, the third singular form was the most common with 21 of 23 forms, or 91 percent. A new person was noted for the first time here: the second person singular *(tú)* form *(juite)*. Only two forms (*jue, juite,* both from *ir* "to go") were properly irregular in their formation; the others made use of regular morphological endings, except for one form *(metó)* which made use of *-ar* verb endings in spite of requiring *-er* verb endings.

Temporal expressions were limited to the adverbs *ya* "already" and *'horita (=ahorita)* "right now." Each was produced once, the former with the preterit form *juite*, the latter with the present indicative form *viene*.

AGE 2.6

Five new tenses made their initial appearance at this age level. They included the present progressive, the periphrastic (*ir a* + infinitive) future, the imperfect, the past progressive, and the past perfect. Of these, the last three were rather infrequent occurring three times, twice, and once, respectively.

Forms of the verbs *ser* and *estar* "to be" continued to be the most common in the present indicative. Together, they comprised 43 percent of the verb forms (43 of a total of 101). All persons of the verb paradigm were represented by at least two forms in this tense; it will be recalled that at age 2.0 the *tú* ("you" familiar) and *nosotros* ("we") persons were absent. As with the previous age, the most common form was the third person singular, accounting for 61 forms. In addition to the "to be" forms, this group included *viene* "he/she comes," *comienza* "he/she begins," *cierra* "he/she closes," *trae* "he/she brings," *quiere/quee* "he/she/it wants," *llama* "he/she/it calls, *gusta* "he/she likes," *cae* "he/she falls," *duele* "he/she hurts," *va* "he/she goes," *enoja* "he/she becomes angry," *carga* "he/she carries," *acaba* "he/she finishes," and *canta* "he/she sings." Except for *tiene* with six occurrences, none of the above forms occurred more than twice; most appeared only once. No verb was found in all persons in the present indicative. *Quiero, viene, tengo, tiene,* and *va* were forms found at age 2.0 and repeated at this level.

There was a tremendous increase in the number and variety of forms in the preterit tense. A total of 36 different verbs were produced, including:

Third person singular

mordió "he/she bit," *metó (=metió)* "he/she placed inside," *salió* "he/she went out, left," *rompió* "he/she tore," *bajó* "he/she lowered, brought down," *jue/fue* "he/she went," *agarró* "he/she took, grabbed," *pintó* "he/she painted,

colored," *tiró* "he/she threw," *quemó* "he/she burned," *cortó* "he/she cut," *tumbó* "he/she knocked down," *vendó* "he/she sold," *quebró* "he/she broke," *casó* "he/she got married," *desbarató* "he/she broke," *vomitó* "he/she vomited," *compó (=compró)* "he/she bought," *cayó/caó* "he/she fell," *quitó* "he/she took away," and *mió* "he/she urinated."

Third person plural

feron (=fueron) "they went," *picaron* "they stung," *cayeron* "they fell," and *prendieron* "they lit."

First person singular

rayé "I scribbled," *dije* "I said," *jui (=fui)* "I went," *jugué* "I played," *susté (=asusté)* "I scared," *eché* "I threw," *quité* "I took away," *cabé (=acabé)* "I finished," *manché* "I soiled," *comí* "I ate," *canté* "I sang," and *lloré* "I cried."

Second person singular

jates (=dejaste) "you left," *hicites (=hiciste)* "you made," *piates (=pegaste)* "you hit," and *caites (=caiste)* "you fell."

The 36 different verbs resulted in 65 verb forms, 41 of them (63 percent) in the third person singular and 15 (23 percent) in the first person singular. No forms were found in the first person plural ("we"), although five were noted in the third person plural ("they"). Verb forms derived from infinitive forms ending in *-ar*, *-er*, and *-ir*, the three Spanish infinitive endings, were represented in the corpus; 25 verb forms were derived from *-ar* infinitives, seven from *-er* infinitives, and one from *-ir*.

Three verbs were irregular in their preterit forms: *dije, jui/jue/fueron*, and *hicites (=hiciste)*. Of the seven *-er* verb forms, two made use of verb morphology characteristic of *-ar* verbs: *vendió* was rendered as *vendó* and *metió* as *metó*. This suggests that, although the children used verb forms from the three classes of infinitives, there was a tendency to use *-ar* verb endings in place of the appropriate ones in the preterit tense forms--a type of "regularization" to conform to numerically predominant *-ar* type verbs. No attempt, however, was made to regularize the irregular forms of *decir, ir,* and *hacer*.

Assignment of stress did not appear to be a problem for these children; all preterit forms had the stress on the appropriate syllable. For first and third person singular, the stress was correctly and consistently placed on the last syllable; second person singular (*tú*) and third person plural (*ellos*) received it on the penultimate syllable.

The present progressive tense, formed by combining the appropriate present tense form of *estar* with the progressive form (English *-ing*, Spanish *-ndo*), was noted a total of 44 times and involved 20 different verbs. Thirty-seven of the forms (84 percent) were found in the third person singular. No first person singular or first person plural form was encountered. Progressive forms included those derived from *-ar* infinitives (*aventando* "throwing," *hablando* "speaking," *pintando* "painting, coloring," *abajando* "lowering," *bañando* "bathing," etc.) as well as *-er* categories (*comiendo* "eating," *haciendo* "doing," *viendo* "seeing," and *lloviendo* "raining").

Two instances were observed of the use of *andar* (literally, "to walk") in place of *estar* in forming the present progressive *(anda pintando, anda comprando)*. The use of *andar* in this fashion is a dialect feature of the Spanish spoken in the geographic area where the data were gathered. *Andar* and *estar* were used interchangeably by the children with no resultant change in meaning. (This writer, a native of the same geographic region, engages in the same practice wnen speaking Spanish.)

The periphrastic future, equivalent to English "going to" + infinitive, added a new dimension, one not present at age 2.0: the ability to express events that have not yet happened. In Spanish, the periphrastic future is constructed by conjugating the verb *ir* in the present tense in the appropriate person, adding *a*, and, depending on the action to be carried out, adding the appropriate infinitive. For our 2.6-level children, the following examples were present:

Sí voy a ir al carnaval. "I am going to go to the carnival." (AAC, II:53)

'Horita va a vinir (=venir). "He's going to come right now." (MMG, I:20)

Van a tomar. "They're going to drink." (MMG, I:14)

Twenty-two periphrastic future constructions were encountered at this level; ten of these were in the first person singular. All persons were represented at least once. The number of forms and their presence across the paradigm suggest that the construction is well on its way toward being established.

The past progressive, imperfect, and past perfect occurred too infrequently to warrant discussion. All three tenses were

noted in the third person singular only, suggesting that new tenses initially enter the child's repertoire as third person singular forms and are later shaped into the required forms for the tense paradigm in question. Since the past progressive is formed by conjugating the verb *estar* in the imperfect and adding the *-ndo* (English *-ing*) form of the verb representing the action being expressed, it seems logical that the imperfect tense would develop before or at least simultaneously with the past progressive. Because of the meager amount of data, this point must be treated, at least for the present, as conjecture.

Ya (12 occurrences) and *'horita* (10 occurrences) were the most common temporal adverbs. Both were used with present indicative, preterit, and periphrastic future. These were no longer the only temporal expressions; also observed at this age level were *en domingo* "on Sundays," *hasta la noche* "until the evening," *'hora (en) la mañana* "this morning," *pues (=después)* "afterward," and *mañana* tomorrow." All except *mañana* were used in utterances containing verb forms (*mañana* was a one-word response to a question in the periphrastic future). Not enough occurrences of specific temporal adverb and tense combinations (e.g., *ya* + present indicative) in the same utterance were noted to establish a pattern.

Cuándo ("when") was used for the first time in a full-sentence question at this level. One occurrence was noted: *¿Cuándo me deja el color?* "When are you going to leave me the crayon?" (MMG, II:57) It is the most sophisticated of the temporal expressions thus far. By virtue of its interrogative structure, *cuándo*

expresses a different relationship than do the other temporal adverb expressions. Instead of specifying a point in time, *cuándo* inquires about the time in which a particular action took place. The other temporal expressions *(ya, 'horita, 'hora en la mañana,* etc.) can all be responses to the *cuándo* query but not vice versa. In this sense, *cuándo* is one step removed from the others, an indefinite and interrogative expression of time. A more complete account of transformations encountered at this age level is found in González (1978b).

By age 2.6, then, new tenses and new temporal expressions appear. Present, past, and future can now be expressed and modified temporally. Preterit forms account for the majority of non-present forms. *Ya* and *'horita* are the most common temporal adverbs. Third person singular verb forms are the most prevalent. Temporal adverbs found a new dimension of expression through the interrogative *cuándo*. Qualitatively, children's speech at this level is far superior to that of the children at age 2.0. Instead of a predominance of present indicative forms, most of which were *ser*, *estar*, and a few preterits, speech at this level contained numerous examples of present indicative, preterit, present progressive, and periphrastic future.

AGE 2.9

No new tenses were produced by the children at this level. The tenses discussed in the previous section, with the exception of the past perfect, occurred in greater numbers. A total of 191 forms were tallied for the present indicative, representing

43 different verbs. As in earlier tenses, the third person singular form was the most common (63 percent of total) with 121 occurrences involving 27 verbs; this was followed by the first person singular with 43 forms (23 percent of total) involving 20 verbs (some verbs occurred in both forms, thus the overlap); the remaining 14 percent were distributed among the other persons in the paradigm. The lowest number, two, was recorded by the first person plural.

The corpus for this group of children yielded a variety of conjugated forms for the present indicative. There were six irregular forms for the first person singular, including *tengo* "I have," *pongo* "I place," *ero (=soy)* "I am," *caigo* "I fall," *estoy* "I am," and *sé* "I know." Verb forms requiring a change from vowel to diphthong in the stem included *puedo* "I can," *duele* "it hurts," and *muerde* "it bites." In each, the *o* of the infinitive is appropriately changed to a *-ue-* to produce the desired form. Verb forms in which the stem vowel *e* was converted to the diphthong *-ie-* were evident: *cierra* "he/she closes," *viene* "he/she comes," and *tiene* "he/she has." One instance was observed in which the /y/ was inserted before the stem vowel: *quiero* "I want"; a change in the stem vowel from *e* to *i* was used to produce *dice* "he/she says."

The infinitive *ir* "to go" was represented by more appropriately irregular forms than any other: *vas* "you (familiar) go," *va* "he/she goes," *vamos* "we go," and *van* "they go." The infinitive *haber*, with only one conjugated form in the present indicative (*hay* "there is, there are"), also appeared in its correct form. The only de-

viation in verb forms was that mentioned earlier, in which *ero* was used twice in place of *soy* "I am." No instances of *soy* were noted in the corpus. With the exception of this form, the children seemed able to produce in full sentences a diversity of present indicative forms, including those requiring stem vowel changes and those needing the introduction of consonants for their creation (e.g., the insertion of *g* in first person singular forms *tengo* and *pongo*).

Use of the present progressive decreased in quantity for these children. Twenty-one forms were produced (compared to 37 at 2.6) with 18 occurring in the third person singular. First person singular forms were produced twice, once each with *estoy* and *ando*. The first person plural (*nosotros* "we") continued to be absent. Also absent at this level (but seen earlier at 2.6) was the second person singular form. It is possible that the decrease in quantity for this tense is related to the near doubling of forms for the present indicative. Since there are instances in Spanish in which present progressive and present indicative are interchangeable without change in meaning, the possibility exists that the children were utilizing the more fully developed of the two tenses. After going through a period of experimentation (age 2.6) during which a number of different present progressive forms were produced, the children may have decided to revert to the more firmly established of the two--the present indicative.

Preterit tense forms accounted for 91 entries, a substantial increase over the number noted at age 2.6. Sixty of the forms (67 percent) were in the third person singular, while 28 (31 per-

cent) were in the first person singular. Only the first person plural verb form was absent, a fact reported at age 2.6 for the same tense and at 2.9 for the present progressive tense. Verbs requiring *-ar, -er,* and *-ir* morphological endings were all represented (e.g., *pintar, comer, salir*). Three verb forms that derive from *-er* infinitives were conjugated using verb morphology characteristic of the *-ar* infinitives: *meter* "to place inside," *perder* "to lose," and *doler* "to hurt." For the third person singular, the children produced *metó* for *metió*, *pedó* for *perdió*, and *weló* for *dolió*. One *-ir* verb suffered the same fate: *abró* was given for *abrió* "he/she opened." Each occurred once apiece. The verb *poner* "to place, put" and its compound *componer* "to fix," both irregular in the preterit, were treated as if they were regular: the correct form *compuso* was rendered as *componió*.

English influence on infinitive formation in Spanish was noted for the first time at this stage. English "catch" and "shine" were used as bases to form *quechar* and *chainar*, respectively. From these new infinitives emerged the first person singular forms *queché* and *chainé* and the third person singular form *chainó*. Examples include:

Yo queché un fish. "I caught a fish." (AL, I:14)

Ella me la chainó. "She shined it for me." (AL, I:26)

Although the stem is derived from English, the morphology used in creating the different forms, the productive aspect, continues to be Spanish. That English influence is present should come as no surprise, since the children were being reared in an environment in which both languages are used in everyday activities.

Periphrastic future constructions numbered 35 at this level, compared to 22 previously. Of the 35, 19 (54 percent) were in the first person singular, nine were in the third person singular, and the rest were divided between second person singular (5) and first person plural (1). Third person plural ("they") was not represented, although it was seen in the age 2.6 data. The imperfect tense was again produced only in third person singular form. Three verbs, the first two of them irregular in this tense, were observed: *ser* "to be," *ir* "to go," and *traer* "to bring."

Si, era grande. "Yes, it was big." (SYW, I:49)

Iba a comelo (=comerlo) todo. "He was going to eat it all." (SYW, I:46)

Taiba (=traía) la coshala (=cuchara). "He was bringing the spoon." (MGG, I:3)

The past progressive occurred only once: *estaban comiendo* "they were eating." As seen above, *estar* did not occur by itself in the imperfect tense, perhaps indicating that the past progressive does not depend on the imperfect for its emergence and development.

Use of *ya* increased at this age, almost tripling the total number observed at 2.6 (33 vs. 12). The adverb appeared in 12 utterances with the preterit, 18 utterances with the present indicative, once with the periphrastic future, and twice with the present progressive. *'Horita* declined in number from nine at 2.6 to five at 2.9. New temporal expressions included *temprano* "early," *hasta mañana* "until tomorrow," and the negative temporal

nunca "never." Only the latter forms occurred with a verb form--the periphrastic future: *Yo nunca voy a ir al beauty shop* "I'm never going to go to the beauty shop" (SYW, II:95). *Después* "afterward," was also produced with the periphrastic future, as in the example *Pues (=después) le vas a comprá (=comprar) uno* "Afterward, you're going to buy her one" (SYW, II:85). *Mañana* and *cuándo*, the other two temporal adverb carryovers from 2.6, were used in isolation.

Thus far, the most common temporal adverbs have been *ya* and *'horita*. Neither seems to occur with any one tense exclusively, and both have appeared with the most common tenses: present indicative, preterit, present progressive, and periphrastic future. At the outset, this writer thought it possible to identify patterns of use of tense and *ya* or tense plus *'horita*, similar to those that can be specified for *mañana* or *ayer* (the former would never appear with a preterit or a present progressive; the latter would never appear with the periphrastic future or the present progressive). Apparently, we are dealing with a different type of temporal adverb, one not restricted to any one temporal division of present, past, or future. That they can be used with different tenses may account for their appearing earlier than other temporal expressions whose occurrence is closely linked to or is dependent on a particular tense. At 2.9, the children appeared to have a strong preference for *ya*, a tendency that continues through age 4.6.

AGE 3.0

The present indicative was observed in a variety of persons and in verbs paralleling those at 2.9 (*-ar, -er, -ir,* irregular first person singular, diphthongization of stem vowel, etc.). The children at 2.9 appeared to have mastered the formation of the tense as has this group of children. For this reason, no detailed analysis of the present indicative is presented in the age levels that follow.

The preterit tense occurred frequently at this level. A total of 150 forms was recorded, an increase of 65 percent over the total at 2.9. Third person singular forms numbered 82 and, as at past levels, were the most common. The first person singular, with 52 forms, was second in frequency. The numerical disparity between first and third person singular forms was narrowed considerably at this stage. The latter figure represents a total of 25 different verbs, while the former represents 37.

All persons in the verb paradigm were represented at least once (first person plural). In the first person singular, 17 of the forms were derived from infinitives ending in *-ar*, three were of the *-er* variety, and one was derived from an *-ir* infinitive. Two irregular verb forms, *dije* (from *decir* "to say") and *jui* (=*fui*, from *ir* "to go") were present as were two "regularized" irregular forms, *poní* (for *puse* "I placed") and *descomponí* (for *descompuse* "I broke"). These are exactly the same forms that appeared at 2.6 for *poner* and *descomponer*. Four of the five verbs produced in the second person singular (*tú*) were *-ar* verbs; the fifth was the irregular verb *ir* "to go." For the third person

singular, 39 verb forms representing 21 different verbs were of the *-ar* type, 23 forms representing six different verbs required *-er* verb morphology, and one form utilized *-ir* verb morphology.

Regularization of irregular verb forms was observed for the third person singular form of *traer* "to bring," *tener* "to have," *meter* "to place inside," and *salir* "to go out, leave." All used morphological endings appropriate for the *-ar* verbs; in addition, *traer* and *tener* used the infinitive form as the stem instead of the first person singular. Instead of *traje* and *tuve*, the children produced *tayó (=trayó)* and *tenó*. For *meter*, results were divided: one occurrence was properly formed *(metió)*, while the other used *-ar* endings *(metó)*. A similar observation was made regarding the forms of *salir*. Four of the five instances were properly formed *(salió)*, while one was not *(saló)*. Not all irregular verb forms were regularized, however. *Hacer* "to make," *decir* "to say," *ir* "to go," *dar* "to give," and *venir* "to come" were all formed correctly *(hizo, dijo, jue=fue, dio,* and *vino)*. Together, these forms accounted for 13 occurrences. These data appear to indicate that although regularization does occur, it is not widespread. Of a total of 23 irregular forms, only five were regularized, suggesting that the children at this level are more likely to produce the appropriate irregular form than a regularized one.

One form was observed in the first person plural, *juimos (=fuimos)* "we went." Of the eight forms produced in the third person plural, five were of the *-ar* type and three were the *-er* type. None of the forms appeared more than once.

At age 3.0, the incidence of occurrence of the present progressive increases once again: from 21 at age 2.9 to 39 forms at present. Thirty-four of these (87 percent) were third person singular forms. The use of *andar* in the formation of this tense was limited to one. The periphrastic future accounted for 48 forms, 25 in the first person singular and 21 in the third person singular. This compares to a total of 35 occurrences at the previous level. No forms were reported for the second person singular, and only one form apiece occurred for the first and third person plural.

The imperfect tense began to blossom at this level. Thirteen verb forms were observed, compared to three at the 2.9 level. First and third person singular were represented, although the great majority of forms were in the third person (12 of 13). Two forms, *era* and *traía*, were repeats from the previous level. Verbs requiring *-ar* endings (*-aba, -abas, -aba,* etc.) accounted for eight forms. Sample sentences included:

¿Coque no me pegaba? "Didn't Coque used to hit me?" (LAT, I:29)

Caminaba así. "He used to walk like this." (LAT, I:11)

Since both first and third person singular make use of the same form, the determination as to which person of the paradigm was being produced had to be made on the basis of context. The fact that the same form is used for both is beneficial in that it allows the child to express more with the same form; one verb form is sufficient in the imperfect indicative to express both first and third person singular.

Present perfect, past progressive, and the conditional were produced once apiece, all in the third person singular. The sole representative was *¿Qué pasaría por la polecía (=policía)?* "I wonder what happened for the police (that the police are here)." (LAT, I:15) The past subjunctive occurred for the first time, after *decir* "to say": *Dije que se bañara contigo* "I said for her to bathe with you." (LAT, II:66) The emergence of this aspect of tense formation is mentioned in passing only; a detailed treatment of the subjunctive mood is beyond the scope of this paper.

The disparity between the frequency of *ya* and *'horita* increased at 3.0 (*ya* = 50 occurrences, *'horita* = 3 occurrences), continuing a trend observed at 2.6 and 2.9. *'Horita* was used with present and preterit tenses (once and twice, respectively). *Ya* was seen 31 times with the present indicative, 21 times with the preterit, and twice each with the imperfect, present progressive, and periphrastic future. There was also one use with the negative imperative form *Ya no llores* "Don't cry anymore." (LAT, II:50) *Cuándo* and *nunca* were observed here again. New temporal adverbs included *todavía* "still," *entonces* "then," *anoche* "last night," and *luego* "then." Each adverb occurred once. The child's repertoire of temporal expressions continued to expand, albeit slowly.

AGE 3.3

A slight increase was noted in the number of preterit tense forms (161 compared to 150 at 3.3). Third person singular and first person singular forms were the most frequent; 94 forms re-

presenting 38 verbs and 52 forms covering 25 verbs, respectively, were produced. Second person singular, including seven forms from six verbs, were third in frequency; the first person plural came next with five forms of the same verb, and the third person plural was seen in three forms, one each for three different verbs.

Verbs derived from *-ar* infinitives continued to be the most popular. A total of 37 different verbs were of this type (nine in the first person singular, three in the second, 23 in the third, none in the first, and two in the third person plural). Verbs derived from *-er* infinitives were far fewer in number, accounting for eight entries (four each in first and third person singular). Ten different irregular verbs appeared in our corpus; each person in the paradigm contained at least one form. Thirty-four irregular forms were noted overall. Regularization (through substitution of *-ar* endings for appropriate ones) accounted for two of the forms, *muró (=murió)* "he died," and *saló (=salió)* "he left." Correctly produced irregular forms were in the majority and included *puse* "I placed, put," *hice* "I made," *fue* "he went," *vino* "he came," and *numió (=durmió)*, "she slept."

Present progressive forms numbered 52 (an increase of 33 percent over age 3.0) and included 27 different verbs; only one entry (*cuentando = contando* "counting") was improperly formed. Third person singular (with 20 occurrences) and first person singular (with a frequency of 16) were the most common, together accounting for 86 percent of the corpus for this tense. Both *-ando* and *-iendo* progressive forms were used. No present pro-

gressive forms with *andar* as an auxiliary were produced at this level. Present progressive forms occurred in the third person plural: five forms, compared to none at 3.0.

Use of the periphrastic future jumped from 48 at the previous level to 80 at the present level, an increase of nearly 70 percent. First person singular forms outnumbered third person singular forms (usually the most common) by almost six to one (63 to 11). The infinitive *contar* was rendered both as *contar* and *cuentar* (twice apiece). No other infinitive form received similar treatment.

Growth in frequency of imperfect forms continued. Twenty-five forms representing eight verbs were encountered. Eighty percent (20 of 25) of the forms were third person singular forms. Only two verbs were found in the plural form:

> *Los grandes taban (=estaban) arriba del cielo.* "The big ones were (used to be) on top of the sky." (RdlF, I:13)

> *Aquí vinían (=venían) pájaros del beach volando con las alas.* "Birds from the beach would come, flying with their wings." (RdlF, I:19)

The past progressive, which makes use of the imperfect form of *estar* or *andar* in its creation, was noted seven times, six of these in third person singular and one in the third plural. One used *andar* as the auxiliary.

Two new tenses made their initial appearance here: the periphrastic past and the periphrastic future progressive. An example of each is given below:

> Periphrastic past: *Ya me iba a pegar.* "It was about to hit me." (RdlF, I:7)

Periphrastic future progressive: *Yo lo voy a estar viendo.* "I'm going to be seeing him." (RdlF, II:52)

Both constructions are composed of parts already well established in the speech of the child: in the former case, the process for producing the imperfect and the *ir a* periphrastic construction; in the latter, periphrastic construction and the progressive *(-ndo)* form. The new tenses were found in the speech of only one informant and thus cannot be taken as representative for this age level.

The temporal adverb *ya* continued to outpace *'horita* in frequency, but not by as much as at the previous level. Fifty-six instances were observed for the former, while the latter accounted for 21 occurrences. The most common tense associated with *ya* was the preterit, with 28 instances. *'Horita* was most often associated with the present indicative and the periphrastic future (ten and nine examples, respectively). Although *ya* appears to be tied to the past tense and *'horita* seems to have a more than casual relationship to the two non-past tenses, no firm conclusions regarding such a connection can be drawn from the evidence; *ya* is also found with the present indicative (15 times) and with the present progressive (seven times). In fact, *'horita* never occurred with the present progressive at this level. We can only propose the existence of a *preference* for certain combinations of *ya* or *'horita* and certain tenses, and not a strict set of rules through which the tense can be predicted on the basis of the co-occurrence of *ya* or *'horita*.

Aside from *ya* and *'horita* 13 different temporal expressions occurred in 50 utterances. The most common was *después* "then,

afterwards" used in conjunction with the present tense, *Después me subo al árbol y después me subo al techo.* "Then I climb the tree and then I climb the roof." (RdlF, I:10) New forms included *a meludía (=mediodía)* "at noon," *anoche* "last night," *a veces* "sometimes," *primero* "first," and *ayer* "yesterday." This last adverb was used with both the periphrastic future, *Voy a ir ayer.* "I'm going to go yesterday." (RdlF, II:54) and the expected preterit tense; both were used by the same child. The emergence of *mediodía, ayer,* and *anoche* suggest knowledge of the divisions of the day and (with the latter two) the accompanying restrictions with respect to the tenses that can co-occur.

The most significant event in the area of temporal expressions at this age level is the use of *cuando* as a relator (instead of as a question word). This new development is important because it allows the child to create more complex utterances through embedded temporal clauses and allows the child to go beyond simple temporal expressions such as *ayer* and *mañana.* The following examples illustrate this point:

A. *Pa' (=para) que se pongan aquí cuando se machuquen un dedo.*
"(Referring to a bandage) For them to put on here when they smash a finger." (RM, I:51)

B. *Cuando venga Benito, voy a volar la huila.*
"When Benito comes, I'm going to fly the kite." (RdlF, II:71)

C. *Cuando ya viene tío Bene, los hallo y me los pongo.*
"When Uncle Bene is coming, I find them and put them on." (RdlF, I:34)

In the examples, the *cuando* clauses describe time in a new and unique way. They specify the conditions under which the actions expressed by the independent clause will take place. Theoretically,

an endless variety of such conditions can be specified; the child is no longer limited to relatively primitive expressions such as *ayer* or *ya*. The use of the present subjunctive in example A is triggered by the fact that the main verb is in the future; compare this to example B in which the main verb is in the present indicative. Both B and C utilize the *cuando* clause to set the stage temporally, and in the case of B, to establish a sequence of events (Benito has to come before I can fly the kite). The children seemed adept at using *cuando* clauses, both with indicative and subjunctive moods. They made the appropriate distinction consistently at this age level.

The appearance of the temporal adverb clause does not signal the emergence of clauses in general. The first clauses appeared at 2.6 (see González 1970, 1978a for a more detailed treatment). Sufficient numbers of temporal adverb clauses appeared at 3.3 to suggest that they are established (28 occurrences). Their appearance several stages after that of *cuándo* as a one-word question and in full questions indicates that they are more complex, that it is more linguistically difficult to specify the time of an action through a clause than to inquire about it through *cuándo*. The query about time seems to precede the specification of time through clauses.

AGE 3.6

At three and a half years of age, the number of preterit verb forms almost triples from that produced at 3.3, increasing from 161 forms to 450. Third person singular forms were the most

prevalent (266), more than two and a half times as frequent as at 3.3. First person singular forms nearly double (103) and are second in frequency of occurrence. Plural verb forms appeared in substantial numbers for the first time. The first person plural form was observed 23 times, representing 11 verbs; this compares to no occurrences at 3.0 and five forms (all from one verb) at 3.3. Examples include *comimos* "we ate," *pintamos* "we painted," *vimos* "we saw," *hicimos* "we made," and *acabamos* "we finished." Both regular and irregular verbs were present. Verbs of the *-ar* type numbered 108; 16 were derived from *-er* infinitives; and six were of the *-ir* type.

Regularization of irregular forms was present and accounted for 11 forms (out of a total of 120 irregular forms). Forms of *poner* "to place, put" were the favorites with seven of the eleven. The regularized form was produced by taking the infinitive as the base form and adding regular *-er* endings (instead of taking the first person singular as a base). This resulted in *ponió* for *puso, ponimos* for *pusimos,* and *ponieron* for *pusieron.* It should be mentioned that *puso* and *pusieron* occurred alongside the regularized forms; in fact, *puso* out-numbered *ponio* by seven to three.

Other forms were regularized as well. *Comer* "to eat" and *subir* "to go up" both made use of *-ar* endings, resulting in *comó* and *subó* (for *comió* and *subió*, respectively). Two instances were found in which the first person singular present indicative was used as a base, producing a diphthong where none was expected.

Jugar "to play" and *volar* "to fly" were treated in this manner. The result was the creation of *juegó* and *vueló* for third person singular, instead of the expected *jugó* and *voló*.

The present progressive corpus consisted of 96 forms, an amount almost twice that found at 3.3 (96 vs. 52). *Andar* auxiliaries appeared again following an absence at 3.3. Sixteen of the present progressive forms were produced with this auxiliary. No forms were noted in the first person plurals; to date, no form of the present progressive has been produced in first person plural. All three types of infinitives were represented in progressive form: *-ar, -er,* and *-ir*. There were 144 forms of the periphrastic future noted at this level, an 80 percent increase over age 3.3. All persons of the verb paradigm were represented; the lowest number of forms was five (second person singular). The third person singular form was the most common at 57. First and third person plural forms, a rarity (one apiece) at 3.3, were represented by 12 and 21 forms, respectively.

The imperfect tense nearly tripled in frequency from the number found at 3.3. Seventy-two forms (compared to 25 at 3.3) were seen, covering 32 verbs. All persons in the paradigm were represented by at least one form, including the first person plural, which was missing at age 3.3. Deviant forms accounted for four entries. Included in this group were *juía (=iba)* "he used to go," and *supía (=sabía)* "he used to know," in which the first person singular preterit forms (dialectal form *jui*, and *supe*, respectively) are mistakenly used as the base for the formation of the tense. In a third verb form, the difficulty stemmed from the use of

improper endings. *Llamar* "to call" was converted into imperfect tense forms by adding *-ía* instead of *-aba* to the *llam-* stem; the result is the incorrect *llamía*.

The periphrastic past, which first appeared at 3.3, increased from three forms to eight. Third person singular had the most forms (5). Only first and third person singular forms were present. The periphrastic future progression continued to be seen only in the first person singular (*yo* "I"). Two examples were noted for this tense. The past progressive accounted for eleven forms, nine in the third person singular, and two in the third person plural. Only those two persons from the paradigm were present. The present perfect, seen initially at 3.0 but not at 3.3, re-emerged. Two forms were produced in the first person singular; one was in the third person plural.

A variation on present and past progressive appeared here for the first time: the *ir* progressives. As the name implies, this type of progressive uses *ir* as the auxiliary instead of *estar* or *andar*. For the present form, for which eight forms were found, the appropriate person of *ir* is combined with the progressive: *va llevando* "he is carrying," *van caminando* "they are walking," *voy cayéndome*, "I'm falling down." The past forms of the *ir* progressives utilizes the imperfect form of *ir* in the appropriate person: *iba aventando* "I was throwing." Addition of this variation provides the child with more flexibility in expressing present and past progressives.

The temporal adverb *ya* was more than three times as popular as *'horita* (78 vs. 25). Both appeared more frequently with the

preterit than with any other tense (nine times), although with *'horita* there were six instances of periphrastic future and five of present indicative. Next in frequency of occurrence with *ya* was the present indicative with 26; this parallels the pattern seen at 3.3 for *ya*. One child used the preterit consistently with *mañana* "tomorrow," producing such incongruous sentences as:

> *Mi mamá tamién (=también) jue al paseo mañana.* "My mother also went to the parade tomorrow." (MDG, I:29)

> *Poque (=porque) me dio mañana cataro (=catarro).* "Because I got a cold tomorrow." (MDG, I:28)

This was the only instance observed of a clear case of temporal adverb--verb tense conflict. Since she was able to produce the periphrastic future on other occasions, we can conclude that the preceding utterances were the result of misuse of the temporal adverb.

The frequency of *cuando* clauses increased by two. In addition to the use of preterit, present indicative, present subjunctive, and imperfect (all of which also occurred at 3.3) in *cuando* clauses, the children produced these clauses with the periphrastic future and the past progressive. No new temporal adverbs surfaced at this level; all had occurred at one or another of our previous age levels.

AGE 4.0

There is a puzzling drop in the number of preterit forms at age 4.0. Whereas 450 preterit verb forms representing 158 verbs were produced at 3.6, age 4.0 only registered 257 forms from 112 verbs. The decrease is a rather large one (43 percent) and is

the only decrease in quantity we've encountered in our established tenses (preterit, present progressive, periphrastic future, and present indicative). Two possible explanations are: the informants recruited at this level may be generally less verbal than those at previous levels, and the peak of 450 reached at 3.6 may have been a fluke. The current total may be more in keeping with normal language growth.

Aside from frequency, few changes are evident in the preterit tense forms at this stage compared to 3.6. Third person singular is still the most popular form, followed by first person singular (110 and 81 forms, respectively). More forms were seen in the third person plural at this level than at 3.6 (52 vs. 44, though the number of different verbs was 32 for both). Only one form, *puse*, was regularized, converting to *ponf*. The other 64 irregular forms were correctly produced, perhaps suggesting that the children at this level, though producing less, are concentrating on refining skills already present.

A decrease was also noted in the frequency of occurrence of the present progressive tense. Eighty-nine forms representing 44 verbs were found, compared to 96 forms (and 45 verbs). The decrease is not as drastic as that of the preterit but is a decline nonetheless. Third person singular accounted for 75 of the forms; no forms were present in the second person singular or the first person plural. The *andar* form of the progressive made a strong comeback here, assisting in the creation of 44 forms.

The periphrastic future also declined in frequency, joining the other tenses in this trend. The frequency at 4.0 is almost

half of what it was at 3.6 (77 vs. 144). All persons of the paradigm were present; numbers ranged from 25 forms for the third person singular to two forms for the first person plural. For this tense, at least, the decrease in frequency did not result in incomplete participation by persons of the verbal paradigm.

The imperfect tense suffered a decrease of 12 forms from the previous level (60 vs. 72, a 16 percent drop). Verb forms in the third person singular were again the most popular (28), with the first person singular a close second (25 forms). The least common was second person singular (one form). No regularized forms were noted, although the opportunity was there in the form of *ser* "to be" and *ir* "to go." Past progressives increased in number, the only tense thus far to do so at 4.0. Fourteen forms were noted, covering all persons of the paradigm (compared to level 3.6, where only third person singular and plural were seen). Periphrastic past forms numbered five, a decrease from the previous high of eight. The same persons noted earlier were found here. *Ir* progressives accounted for six forms in the present and two in the past; only third person singular and third person plural were evident. First person singular forms, seen at the previous level, did not occur here.

The perfect tenses were represented by the present and past varieties, the latter new to this level. Four forms of the present were encountered, all produced by the same child; second and third person singular and third person plural were produced. The past perfect was limited to one entry in the third person singular, *Le había picado* "It had stung him." (OJM, I:34) The rare occur-

rence may reflect its relative infrequency in everyday speech.

The general decrease in frequency of tenses was not accompanied by a decrease in temporal expressions. Overall, more temporal expressions were evident here than at any previous level. A total of 245, including 98 entries for *ya* and 28 for *'horita*, was observed. This compares to a previous high of 168 total number of occurrences at 3.6. It is almost as if the children were making use of temporal expressions to compensate for the general decrease in verb forms. There is no evidence that this is indeed the case. There was no increase in expressions that can in themselves indicate the tense of the verb, such as *ayer* or *mañana*. As has been pointed out, the vast majority of temporal expressions are not of this type. The decrease in frequency of verb tense forms and the increase of temporal adverbial expressions thus do not appear to be related.

Temporal expressions by means of a *cuando* clause were slightly more frequent than at 3.6 (an increase of one for a total of 31). Present indicative, present subjunctive, imperfect, and past subjunctive forms were appropriately utilized. *Mañana* was used incorrectly with the preterit and imperfect tenses a total of three times. Other temporal expressions included *nunca* "never," *entonces* "then," *en la noche* "at night," *anoche* "last night," *ayer* "yesterday," *un día* "one day," *después* "afterwards," *todavía* "still," *hace mucho* "a long time ago," *primero* "first," *al último* "at the end," *luego* "then," *el otro día* "the other day," *todos los días* "every day," *el viernes* "Friday," *antes* "before," *los lunes* "on Mondays," *en veces* "sometimes," *en la mañana* "in the morning,"

siempre "always," and *en el día* "during the day." Frequency of occurrence for these ranged from a single instance to 25 *(luego)*. Children at this level appear to have quite a repertoire of temporal expressions which, when combined with the different verb tenses, can result in utterances that are quite specific with respect to time.

AGE 4.6

Preterit verb forms increase over the number reported at 4.0, but the total is still below the peak of 450 reported at 3.6. Overall, 270 forms representing 103 verbs were observed at 4.6, compared to 257 forms and 112 verbs at age 4.0. This lends some support to the notion that the number of forms produced at 3.6 was exceptionally high (assuming, of course, that the frequency of occurrence for the tenses becomes greater as the child gets older, that each succeeding level will produce greater numbers of a given tense than the previous one). A second possibility exists that beyond 3.6, growth in verb tenses, as judged by frequency of occurrence, begins to level off or increase in smaller increments. It remains for future studies to determine which, if any, of the possibilities mentioned is accurate.

Third person singular forms, continuing a well-established trend, were the most popular: 138 forms were reported, representing 52 verbs. The first person singular was second with 63 forms and 31 verbs. Almost as many verbs (30) were utilized in the third person plural, but the resultant number of forms was smaller (36). Twenty-seven irregular verbs were included in the tally for this

tense; of these, only one was regularized through use of the wrong morphological ending (*abró* for *abrió* "he/she opened"). The same array of verb types *(-ar, -er, -ir)* encountered at earlier levels was seen here. Although the number of verb forms may be less than at 3.6, it seems clear that the quality of verb expressions (as judged by the use of different types of verbs) has not diminished.

The present progressive tense was produced 103 times, 77 of which were in the third person singular. This represents an increase of 14 over age level 4.0, a modest gain. All forms of the paradigm were present; two were represented once (second person singular and first person plural) and one twice (first person singular). A total of 71 different verbs was produced. The periphrastic future did not fare as well in frequency; 54 forms were reported, representing a decline of 23 from the previous level and 90 from the all-time high at 3.6. Slightly less than half of the forms (26) were in the third person singular. Forty verbs were included, compared to 49 verbs at level 4.0 and 84 at level 3.6. The children produced all persons of the paradigm for this tense.

Production of the imperfect tense increased dramatically, almost doubling the number encountered at 4.0 (118 to 60). This total was 63 percent greater than that noted at 3.6. The favorite form was the third person singular with 76 forms. This was followed by the first person singular with 23. Both *-aba* and *-ía* endings were in evidence. The imperfect seems to have reversed the trend and, rather than continuing to decrease, has increased greatly in

frequency.

Past progressive forms occur only in first person singular and third person singular (one and seven forms, respectively), a decrease of six from the number noted at 4.0 (14). The limitation of this tense to first and third person singular forms only is identical to the situation at age 3.6. Periphrastic past forms were absent at this level. *Ir* progressives numbered nine, six in the present, and three in the past. The past included *ir* in both preterit and imperfect tenses, *Me jui aliviano = aliviando* "I started getting better" (PG, I:45) and *Ibanos (=íbamos) entrando* "We were going in" (JHC, II:56). Little change was noted from the previous level.

The present perfect and past perfect were present in small numbers (three forms and one form, respectively). The past perfect subjunctive appeared once: *Le hubieras dicho a la muchacha que te diera el monito* "You should have told the girl to give you the little figure" (JHC, II:53). The past subjunctive was produced 11 times, nine in the third person singular form. The third person singular form was also the only one represented in the conditional and inflected future tenses. One instance of each was noted: *sería* "he/she would be" and *acuestará (=acostará)* "he/she will go to bed." Both tenses had been seen at earlier levels in very small numbers (rarely more than one instance).

Temporal expressions decreased from that found at 4.0 but was greater than the total at level 3.6. One hundred ninety-nine instances occurred, including 57 uses of *ya* and 11 uses of *'horita*. The proportion of *ya* and *'horita* to the total is less at this level

than at 4.0. Second in frequency to *ya* were *cuando* clauses, with a total of 38 entries, seven more than at 3.6. Present indicative, present subjunctive, preterit, and imperfect tenses were all used in *cuando* clauses. Some new temporal adverbs occurred; but in general, they were variations of types found at 4.0. (*unas veces* "sometimes" vs. *a veces* "at times"). Tenses and temporal adverbs were found in new appropriate combinations, indicating that the child has the ability to create novel sentences using portions acquired earlier.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The major points of this study can be summarized thus:

(1) Irregular verb forms appear from the earliest levels in the present and preterit indicative.

(2) The largest simultaneous occurrence of new tenses is found at age 2.6; present progressive, periphrastic future, imperfect, past progressive, and past perfect made their initial appearance.

(3) Third person singular is the most popular form across tenses; new tenses always made their initial appearance through this person.

(4) There was an early tendency to provide *-ar* morphology to verbs requiring *-er* and *-ir* endings; this decreased in frequency across time.

(5) The children had no difficulty in assigning stress. Even the "regularized" forms had the proper stress.

(6) *Ya* and *'horita* were the most common temporal adverbs by far. Frequency is linked to their ability to co-occur with a variety of tenses, since the adverbs *per se* do not indicate a specific time.

(7) Imperfect tense begins to solidify at 3.0, increasing in frequency and variety at 3.3, 3.6, and again at 4.6.

(8) Conditional, inflected future, and the perfect tenses are rare and do not appear consistently across age levels.

(9) In general, frequency of occurrence of the different tenses increased across time; the exceptions were age 4.0 where a major decrease in number of forms was encountered and 4.6, in which frequency of occurrence approximated that at 4.0.

(10) The *cuando* clause, which first emerged at 3.3 and continued to increase in number thereafter, was a milestone in the area of temporal expression. A new complexity formerly unavailable through "regular" temporal adverbs are now possible.

There is little information on the Chicano children's learning of the first language (Spanish). This paper attempts to help fill this void by examining the verb tenses and concomitant temporal adverbs used in the speech of Chicano children between the ages of 2.0 and 4.6 years of age. Teachers and curriculum specialists can use such information as the sequence of emergence of tenses and adverbs in the development of lessons and materials for this population. It can provide a basis for determining what verb tenses and temporal adverbs may be expected in the Chicano child's repertoire at a certain age level.

For teachers interested in English as a Second Language, this paper can provide guidelines on Spanish structures the children already possess and which may have a grammatical parallel in English (e.g., the present perfect tense). For bilingual programs in which one of the objectives is the maintenance or the restoration of Spanish, the information contained in this paper will help teachers understand the sequence of acquisition of verb tenses and temporal adverbs in Spanish. For teachers interested in helping Chicanos recover their fluency in Spanish, this information will be helpful in establishing the sequence of presentation of Spanish items. Finally, for pre-school bilingual programs, the information is valuable for providing a sequence of acquisition in Spanish that can help determine the linguistic content of the lessons presented and provide a set of guidelines on what can be expected at the different age levels between 2.0 and 4.6.

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